THE POET AT ITS DESK

Brita Bergland

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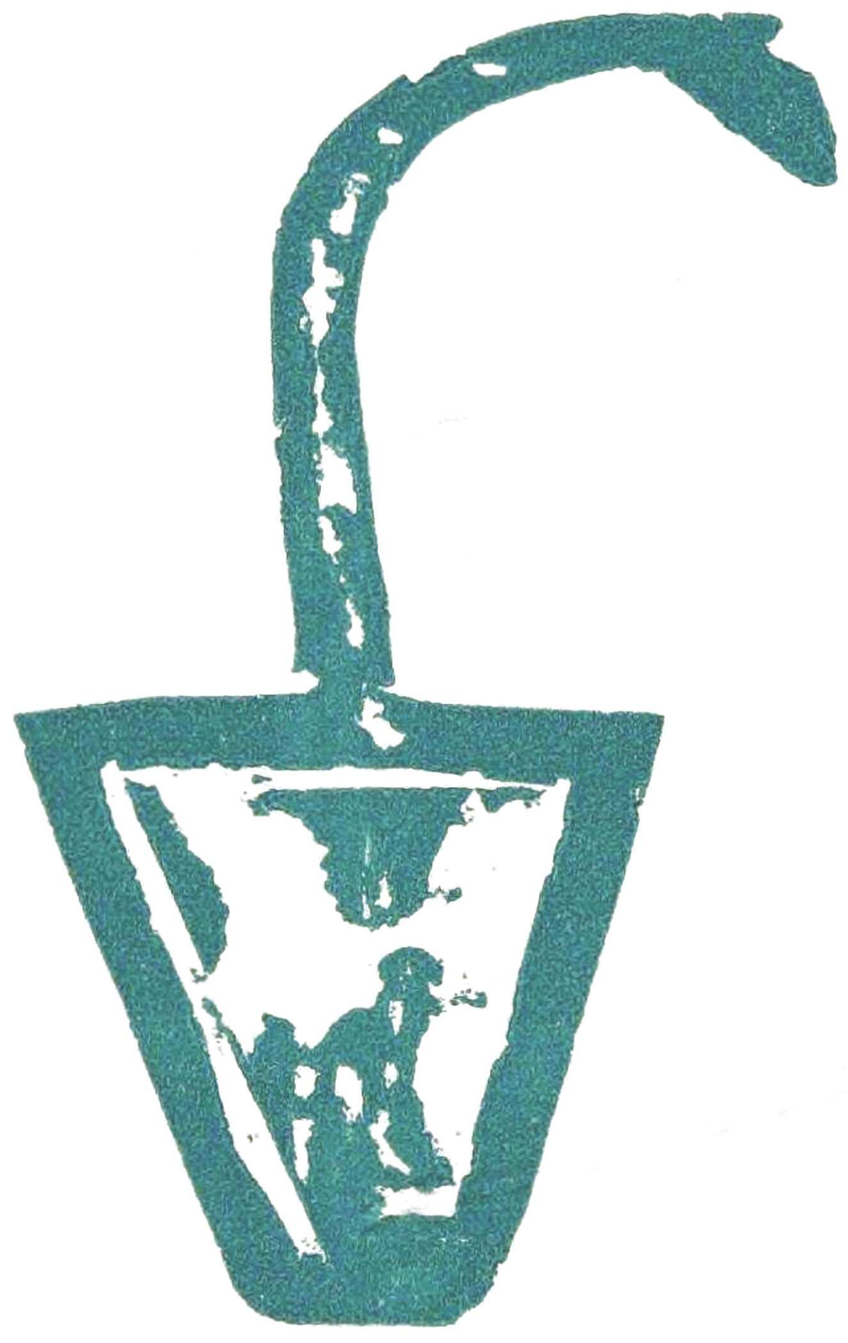

AWEDE
1987

The Nettle
Specious

ON EARTH AS IT IS THE HEART

with, the wherewithal
to lower the dream of the snowy incantator
the kingdom incarnate

an animal must take care of itself
in the form of the man diablo
day to day named in reaction

sensible mistrust and apprehension
missing the children
the man after, then another

betrayed of her lesser betrothed
mistaken engravings
a burnt integer in the hand

FEMININE MOUNTAINS SENT

From strayed evocation
a third vocation
aggressive mount
to the mute and salty edge.

Under sunlight's pensive benevolence,
a dyad of sheep and fence,
wires unrolled in startled positions.
In her place a slendor shrug,
possessive ignorance,
a reading of such distance
as soothes her.

"What has happened here?"
The thistle expired validity.
Woman-made-woman is
no project to a man's incontinence:
such mislaid affirmation,
so many silly articles of faith!
At the apex, hesitation
pitches gothic. Content elevates
fact to fiction.

WONDERLAND

A description of falling down among the ferns and ashes.

A woman's piety strongly the earth in the mood of plants.

In the shadow of the children, a woman functions at top-speed,
three or four little girls, a pond, the woman washing
the bathing suits. The corner of a man's presence, narrow
eyes.

A black door on a hill. Iris and day lilies planted too
deeply. The evening against the sky, tree and house
blown northern hills, a round white table, the family
gathers for rhubarb pie, casual destruction of the
wild wonderland.

On the edge of the hill, matter in series. Over on the edge
of falling, the tree, the family, lost under the north
sky, inward flames. The little girls and woman are
vision to his retreat as the man runs.

Under a heavy woolen cloak. Derision of entry. Illusive
finger by finger.

WONDERLAND II

The leaves in the brook by the wrap of the heart.
Yellow hours. Thin approach, one after another.
All that is left, swaddled. The shirt sleeve.
The yellow blanket. Where, as winter approaches,
where to steal a last breath, a yellow trap.

A REASONABLE INVITATION TURNED DOWN

The frost in the manner of the mother and son,
displayed faction of licentious swirl. Circling loss
to a third pronoun. Novus Ordo Saeculorum.

To cloister oneself in the wrap of skin.
To dribble a second repast, another choice.

Translate to the painter an inch of content.
American history grabs from the table,
pulls out all the ribs, seclusion.

A STABLE AFFAIR

First this: doll wing, writer afloat, messages sent *and* received. Circles of gold, of silver, raw leather harnesses. In the stable, three little girls, four kittens, 24 blackened stallions. *Ask*. The hills are predisposed to hay and flowers. Green amalgam: hill-to-flower-to-stony-ridge. The heart under granite, earth's finer recess. No safety nets, no burning ladders, the hay hot and ancient. A thousand pounds steps on the foot— the fatal mistake was to be there at all, with his head chopped and his wretched miscreant soul. This is how to arrange oneself on the table: right hand–salt, left hand–pepper, one eye–fork, two eye–teaspoon, elbow–knives, sex–butter, knees–glass, feet–placemat. From the navel, a burning candle. Throughout his sense of season, *flat*. Another nosegay chomped in the horse's teeth.

REDUCING

The woods, a church
a foundation, a tree

Widows' places
Abandoned femme
Home of fear and frustration

Tomb-ward
Omb
Orb of family

Rocks make sense
To aspire to rock
angular, green, cold

A child's history
Collusion. Collision.

Left to the rocks and trees.

GRANITEVILLE

Speak seduction
the thoughtful carriage
aids detours' travel.

By tyranny grazed chastity
coward to coward
unable to stop.

A deep, internal dive
I took the cutting hand
the wild boat.

Such capability circumscribed
cables of temerity
the rock or sea.

PHOTOREALISM

In the white shade of shoes
the portent deeming,
a woman on the terrace.
Order, her hair, a vantage to the cliff
and sea. Miles further,
smell of peppers and azaleas.

To sustain the lunation
casual drink, possession.
The moment of entry as the clouds part,
such abrupt and terrible kisses.

Shallow folding
a green stripe down the back.
At the feet, a cat,
the final mount, distortion,
a moist ring, a bracelet of cacophony.

THE FIFTH POSSIBILITY

Three weeks. No recompense.
Night cloud alike the man-spirit rides
evangelical moon. A voice distant and
abstract—closer the star points.
The fifth force as yet unfounded.
Another from inside the spherical
place of maelstrom, misguided,
the lonely quirk in the lonely night.

A curative time, waiting one phase of darkening,
another phase of darkening, over and over,
dimming the unsound.
This night spectacle beguiles,
lifts an unchanging
heart out of itself, smiles at the
mounting snow.

To accumulate one loss, another,
there is the sleeve, the observed pattern
of frost on the window. The soul is for
the three blind mice. "Love is not fragile,"
he said as he sat spilling rubies
and diamonds into the cracks of the floor.

VILLAGE TALK

What else could the puzzled little village maidens
think or say — and what else we?

Not in the age of the single mother
the invitation to birth breeds success of discontent.

Over at the castle
he's stoking three stoves, has orange juice and vitamins,
continued form, gray grass on white earth.

Pick out the eyes, the swindle of desire,
dark magic a bandied cockscomb
frozen in the snow.

Unrelated, his bound animal lies gently
in his pants, a quiet diary of two women's
eventful and doggy life. The rivet of warmth
at night imagines with the senses,
in the morning, the pen.
Is a confession of distraction
heart or mind? In the midst,
the thawing of formless desire.

MISTER MAN MAN HEADS HOME

Human independence fell down around him:
there was no wind left.
A giant yoke, a misshapen moonbeam,
his love sloppily around his neck.
He thought he was travelling through time and space
but time and space were tossing him about,
a fickle rider on a faithful mare.
Not knowing the nature of her soul,
he tossed to her flaming poppy
the fumes and noise of the interstate.
Such was the search for a woman
who would eat oats from his hand.
"Mama! I'll put on that shirt now!"
He turned off her brook and flowers.
He held out his tongue and bit.

AT THE MOVIES

Beyond the piled roses
catching up, a letter's
paw of sex, the color of
the light of day

A movie notice at distance:
both shoes to be
objects
held under the pillow

Face in the pillow
alive in the crest
fragment of golden has-no-more
killed the dark

And there
a rib of the green skirt
a realm assumed of the senses
to become a little notice

Rapid colors, a woman rendering full
tying off the hands
a screen rebound
intertwined

TO MENTION

Upon the causeway
casting a white shirt
masculinity: the horse's mouth
femininity: the trial sun

To burn is elliptical
To have both
an object to love: an object adored
the birthday time

An aura roused
a fallen curtain
He said "wee-wee-wee"
because he was sad

The strange light that comes from the dark
Now everything is steadfast
The night in the bright of the dawn
Below and above the ear
Total

WHOSE MIND IS MINE

The mother hears the voices all wrong
an earful of presents
smatterings of inertia
(knock, knock: life calling)

Am I, here I am, the mind of another mother
a mind matters to the decisive slice of its context
the dirt in the line of the caucus
(the neighbors stare at my departure
lights flashing)

This is whose is these
my mind
mine
(not funny, he put another hunk of the house
on the fire)

The snowy countryside
evergreens, thin contour
stone outcroppings
(sabateurs)

As she is regarding the landscape
a new, fourth environment
not earth or sun or moon
(neither north nor south)

If you're listening to the voices
the correspondence
the snowbank, a glove
(silver hair)

OH, MAMA!

A mother and father step out of the truck. The air
rearranges the woman's head, is inside or outside.
Aflutter with childish impulse, the mother's
network stops here.

Cool November days. Heredity is calling her back. A house,
the edge of the woods: a girl on a swing. Whistling,
a call of sadness flattens out. Birds of the sawmill
announce lunch. A man she never knew is calling her
back, stealing my mother, rearranging the day.

Misshapen animals, bird's wing, the mother sighing,
sighing. Shyness vanishes when she speaks to the
buck, the bunny. Slam the box shut tight! She's
the truck and the car and the whole deal. In level
penetration, not equipped. Squalls. A storm rolls in.

A LULLABY OF DISTRESS

At the peak of performance
a last bird call falls from the top of the stairs.
Out of work or thought
a baby's cry. The plop in the pillow.

From this songful servitude
the angle of mother to child, obtuse,
obsequious, the house a rug on the back,
a small rag to pee in.

Eyelids, a lack of focus,
the high immortality rate
night falls in blankets
wool stars choke the breath.

What interest does this motherhood serve?
The child grows tender and tender.

HISTORY

The wind in the fire is personal to the eastern half of the country. Over the ledges explore furthur creeping animals, the minimalist's landscape amid a miserly step out the western side of the man is the man is the way into the more interesting side. He read a solid piece of writing, a western language thriller, mouse step to the old west, though it has never been my heritage, I am a failed speaker, limited to the eastern century's death groans just enough through the heart, driving me on my age a cowgirl arrested in her metamorphosis.

That extra-personal hoax was a relationship anyway, not to be valued now, the ultramarine train took me further and further away, slightly that state evaporated, shyly Mandelstam's grinding century over and over in his head like a cat chasing its tail, I sped towards a reasonable metaphysics and held an angel in my arms amid the millions of empty breezes and valleys in the world. Roughed up and miserable, I took it all back into, have gilded everything with notes of stringed instruments and little girls' voices uncomfortable and silently these hymns about me I renege realize the bridges get torn down and the awkward cowgirls at the world's summit stupid and vernacular.

MORNING DISARRAY

A murky collar, the abdomen lies awake.
In search of the city, the space of
the crowned essence. No sense in
narrative: a thimble, the furnace,
a car passing by. As absolute,
the morning hair, grief's pittance clings
to a nightgown. The hum of the lonely sky.
Pools in the frozen brook. From
emotional salvage, a docket of events,
the child's lips, vacant arms,
nettle specious.

A RIDE IN THE COUNTRY

swinging the legs
the saddle sanitized
stated route of the holy men

mindful cries
the hammer in the woods
somber bird's tongue

TURTLE RIDE

Mystery hole
Foot rest on a little stool
At her spotted knee
a phoebe to spy the horse's ninny

Myths of causerie
it was cold & green
a simple snap of the wrist for entertainment

The Poet
At Its Desk

THE POET HITS THE RUMMAGE SALE

1. Environment: New England

High arches officiate.
The minister is silence to his bosom.
Out of the woods come all the rabbits.
He left his divine everywhere. The missile
a glass rod of ice blue sperm.
The mind, its rummage sale.
The clock strikes ten. No one sees the sky.

Their withered personalities ate attractive
sport, shed eggs in the woodstove.
The march of time led them on:
sale flyer to bum fuck.
Our minister's divine ash was an
angel wing on an alumni magazine.
A pile of sweaters and shirts,
sleeves of achievement. His cravat
is churned.

2. *The Poet Has Guests*

The poet sits, with his peculiar biology,
a wet nurse to his own ratio. At his
brother's tender urgency, anger draws
them together, then separates them. Spurious
sparing. The evening's spare innocence.
Birds everywhere, the brook and its velvet
underdress. Stored with grain, emotionalism,
a more formal accounting of the latest
Russian fashions.

The poet's dress is from a rummage sale.
He fingers the hem. His hesitance advances
the afternoon quickly. Po-po and the daughter.
Coffee with prose in it. Ditty foods and
bye-bye till next time.

3. *The Poet At Its Desk*

Infiltrate the language skin.
Take a leading role.
Hold your mouth to the full moon.
Take a large bite.
Remove yourself from the skin, the role
and the moon.

4. The Poet At Mother

Mother. Mother who. Mother a
wounded sop, split in the head
with a grammer and a child.
He's hardly holding on to the century.
His heaven a prayer and a dance.
Divine poetics a fat woman's
brawny donut. The missile aimed
away from the face. The temperate spire
through his mother's heart.

5. Dropping The Hat

Place a chevron in a grave.
Sport milk and honey.
Bring the magic wort out of the closet.
Alive, alive-oh.
Watch for a picture of the poet's foot.

THE PARSNI(MONY) PRINCIPLE

supposed to be *noon* not *moon*
of extra-diagonal said nicely
song a parsimony dance, "a whey
down south that knowledge do em good"
important to achieve the new interior
not a dream diary but one construct—
construed to mean it have it in it

'no no mama san I lost the
cat to a pelt collector'
penurious pay attention to
the penult pe-nul-t
(parsnips too abound here)
narrative a need for memory
if you couldn't write it all down

(like M)

silly m

(spu)n of it all

seriously into it

amount

a mar xk

immense is it

in it

the

FORTUNE'S TYPESETTER

emotionalism bites

over sell of

the echo words said

some cancel not saying

trying to come down to the page

the relief

too much impression

too little black ink

the over over word

sentence way of all men ink

packing it in

klet time off the wo(sentence)

willingly wise say (ing)

impositioning

one week since a word hit it

injured the back of the head

impression positive pri-ink

AFTER THE TRICK

rose and green patterns
daft spaces
words realize

of attitude mistaken
of force aware
confidence be plenty

or
the splendid, splendid be
as in nature,
be low.

STANDARDIZED

Six steps, a landing, turn,
five steps, a landing, turn,
an orchid floor, and west,
there's the desk, to sit down.

"What is going to be the name of the poem
is *Evening*."

To hear her say "flower"
her one English word, as round
and plump as a peony.

BOOKS

In cover, maligned.
To cover, repose.

A square territory.
Holes on the horizon.

One extremely large numeral.
Two small, short words.

A child's pronunciation.
Thanks and no thanks.

For resemblance, interest.
A bolt of gray cloth.

HOMER

Just that red dot there on the words
some sort of attention getting
talisman
(the voice not insincere
but antic—dotal)
reasoning the misplaced
vocabulary of ring—around—
the—roses pocket full of po
sporting life!
able to make the mind leap eep
jump of humor (Homer the dog let the
message through)
important to be formal
imagining a rendezvous

STOPPAGES

Editing his letters
or some such distaff.

A network seeks its own end.
The specific event. The instant.
Plot. Out the heart, the window.
Cracked glass emancipates.
The dead mule on the lamb on the hole.
Buried up to the neck in the slab.

LEGIBILITY READS TWO EYES

Form an abandoned carriage
sent by his mother to relieve
herself of a musical inability.
A character invented for both sides.

Three Poems for Victor S

LETTERS NOT ABOUT METHODS

Letters: not about words
all potential drawn
sweet sweet sweet
up or down

if, with head intact
true to thought
investigated

this notation
of particle
a gallant edification
purposeful &
mistaken: lazy, sloppy
method for method
pssst observant

I'm in a sunny frame
eyes to the hilt
the situation hardboiled
factual

Letters not about sex
but played up, cajoled
matkol, amktol am mt l
or
kmtol, mkalo, am mt l

pick pick pick
at the tinsel: the page
at best, the sanctity
of the sleeve

HO, MAYAKOVSKY!

From the cellar
motion beckons motion
anathema maranatha
the dangerous alliance
of ice and more ice

Earthly calculations and dreaded meetings
banded a spirited cloth
for secrets slipped maternal affect

each volume a conscious slug
of fattened verse, sloppy horsemeat
of frozen politics, chewed at the corners,
hugged by the warm suck-mouth of superior voices

The golden icon of a boiled egg
the razzamatazz of a delousing bath
a simple shot in the heart
can be so cold

The mighty prospect's prospect
At the lamp post, a cigarette's smile
punches out the eye's reckless vision
Tap tap tap
honor and fortitude are no bemused spectacle
Tap tap tap
it's silent
a steadfast pea in the nose

A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

In a round room
in the world of cold relief
I knew them both
Jack Frost and Icy Mandrake

Away from the stove
plot falls to strangers
curves on a graph

As to form
a lantern in the haystack
lusty rustic hunger
benign emotional boot

At the house of arts
peculiar diets, a marble fly
your dear explosive aphorisms

Out of nonsense, chapped skin
jacks of one trade lay side by side
the american act of demanding a desk

Sedition from this house of cards
the door knocker frozen to its own
ghoulish grimace

I crave bacon as a strange white dog
eats snow at the back door.
A man I knew surrounds himself
with untenable women. From
caucasian myopia, six silent months.

Out of an eye for an eye
come juicy, chewable tears.

AN OUTING WITH HORATIO ORIFORCE

I

Jack-in-the-nimble
be quick
astride the candlestick

Bounding down the hill
the spring rubs vim in the eye
of the beholden

As wind will bring the elms
crashing down, formalism decides
to take off its shoes and enter
through the back door, maybe smoke a cigarette
at the kitchen table.

I am shuffling papers,
pulling nails from the windows,
beckoning ferocity to come on down.

The small group for control
is laying out quatrains in
the garden, so that, evasively, a
dialogue of gentlemen to made-of-mad
woman will not spiral off.

2

Jack, in the quickness of the candlestick
Jack, in the quickness of the ca
bounding down the hill

Takes the short cut into town
past the Coon Club,
he's on his way to a visit from
some wild turkeys.

Jack, in the underbrush, reading.
Overhead, the clouds are higher and higher,
and Jack is getting a little sleepy.
Waist-high stumps of the forest.

It's late summer and the asters are
out. Jack's breath is quick.
The face in the earth's crust is
kindly.

Doors blown open from the wind.
Time is shuffling around,
testing it's nose on the brink of
the future. Jack asleep with
one arm stretched ahead,
coddling a wild turkey.

3

Horatio finds himself with specious company
aboard a ship of related fools. His arm is
twisted by a man sticking feathers in his
face. It's twilight. Reason is resting
with the ferns. Jack's Horatio is loose.

From the movement of the sun a lot is being
drawn that will decide who will fight the
bandit pirates. Horatio's fate lays before
him, the nasty plummet of a nasty bird.
This sleep is not gentle, a fortuitous
mosquito finds Jack's feathered arm
and arouses him from his distinguished
slumber.

4

Jack in the battle
of a heavy mist, over hills
and roads alike. The forehead a damp spot.
Much hallucination goes into all this:
his clock is set to a vexatious sphere.

Incredibly bright birds
flash back and forth in jungle fashion.
Gold trinkets fly at the dungeon.
Jack is just about to find his place
in the book he is carrying.

Jack knows all the Indian names for the
full moon. Jack knows all the mushrooms to eat
after a spring rain. Jack can tickle the belly
of a brown trout.

5

From Horatio's perspective
there's no other side
no room for summer's spirited play.
Any angel that delivers, delivers *now*.

Horatio has his sword out.
To him, the ferns are chafe
to a night's sleep.
The eyes in his head revolve
at different intervals,
sponsors of the tawdry column.

Horatio takes a good look
at the hill that stands before him.
On the other side, something familiar,
something uncomfortable.

6

The book is open to Pugachev's near discovery
of Marya Ivanova. Both Horatio and Jack
know this story inside out. A bit of a torrent
is coming down. The road into town takes
quite a rise.

Cease your murmur, mother-forest green:
Do not hinder me, brave lad, from thinking.

The ascent is basically easy.
Jack, however, is not in the mood for thought.
Not a single light,
not a single star.

7

Is that Pugachev in the sleigh, crying?
From opposition, exhaustion.
A search for a match, a crown or a comb.
From confusion.

In the low points
under the brambles,
at the point of a nest of a thrush,
the mosquitos and fireflies
hum all of Jack's names in perfect harmony.
To watch someone leave reluctantly, or to ride away,
is to blame oneself.

Jack's bramble draws the crimson blood of
Pyotr Andreyevich. Yet Pyotr Andreyevich never
threw fits. The rasp of the breeze
in the ferns overhead is courtesy
to the insects.

8

From in and out the trees
the moon lights the path
as the scholar turns before
his familiar walls.
Jack is lucky.

The nails have been pulled from the windows.
The wind is settled, the elms are quiet.

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